

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242060
Site Address:	Unit 310, Wharfedale Road, Winnersh, Wokingham, RG41 5TP
Expiry Date:	22 October 2024
Site Visit Date:	16/09/2024
Proposal: Full application for the proposed installation of a Liquid Nitrogen storage tank, plant enclosures, heat pumps/ chillers, process chillers, effluent waste tank and flues.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Major development location – Winnersh
Core Employment Areas – Winnersh Triangle Business Park
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
Nuclear Consultation Zone
Electricity Sub Station
JCEB Mineral Safeguarding Areas
Flood Zones 2 and 3

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP15 – Employment Development
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB11 – Core Employment Areas TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use TB21 – Landscape Character

	TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity DM10 - Flood Risk
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
130634	Change of use to allow the following single or combination of uses: Class B1(b); Class B1(c); Class B2; and Class B8 (with ancillary office use).	Approved 18/07/2013
122192	Application for a non-material amendment to planning consent F/2012/2039 to allow: removal of services plant enclosure from the roof and erection of replacement at ground level; adjustment of proposals for HGV access to warehouse: replacement of ventilation grilles on S and W elevations with windows to match existing; adaptations to external landscaping; new fence and gate.	Approved 02/01/2013
120348	Relocation of reception area with new door and canopy, levelling of existing landscaping to create parking to 310 Wharfedale Road, plus internal alterations.	Approved 30/11/2012

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection
WBC Drainage – Requested additional clarification (see details below)
WBC Ecology – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Ecology Newts – No comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site is the building identified as 310 Wharfedale Road, Winnersh, located within the Winnersh Triangle Business Park. The building is a typical industrial unit, comprising warehouse space and office accommodation. The site has access from the north via Wharfedale Road. There is a secure gate that separates the work yard to the south from the employee and visitor access to the north.

The work yard runs down the western elevation side of the application site and the site neighbours an additional industrial unit, 300 Wharfedale Road, to the east, occupied by Virgin Media, which is joined to the application building. Beyond the work yard to the west are a series of smaller industrial units, while the application site is well screened by way of trees and vegetation to the south, beyond which are some residential dwellings. The building is roughly square in shape, having a predominantly cladded finish.

The specific application site in which development is proposed is located to the south-west of the commercial building, extending from an area of a former grass verge onto a small part of the hardstanding which sits adjacent to the building.

Proposal:

Planning permission is sought for the installation of a nitrogen storage vessel, plant enclosure, pumps, tanks, chillers and associated flue at 310 Wharfedale Road. The main bulk of the development will occur on the south-western corner of the main building on an area comprising part of a former area of grass verge and extending out onto a small area of hardstanding to its north and west. Within this area, it is proposed that 2 no. compounds will be erected, the first containing heat pumps, chillers, effluent waste tank, process chillers and associated pipework. The second compound will house the Liquid Nitrogen (LN2) tank, with a shower to be placed externally. A small Chemical store will be housed to the south of these compounds abutting the grassed area.

At the rear of the application building, a gas cylinder cage will be installed, while associated extractor fan discharge flues will be erected upon the roof of the industrial building, towards the south-western corner of the main building. The flues will have heights of approximately 2.03m and 3m.

The Cover Letter states that the building will be occupied by Oxford Quantum Circuits (OQC); however, the proposed plant works are essential for the successful occupation of the building and business continuity. The company already have a nearby presence, being located in Block B on Eskdale Road, also within the Winnersh Triangle Business Park. OQC develops and builds advanced quantum computers utilising superconducting qubits and their patented Coaxmon chip.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of

sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located within a major development location in the settlement of Winnersh and is acceptable in terms of the principles stated in the Core Strategy, including Policy CP15, which allows for the expansion of business, industry or warehousing in Core Employment Areas such as Winnersh Triangle Business Park. Paragraph 85 of the NPPF further reinforces the desire to support planning applications where proposals allow for businesses to invest, expand and adapt, contributing towards building a strong, competitive economy, noting that the needs of local businesses should be considered.

The proposal involves development works that would allow OQC to make more efficient use of the application building and allow for the expansion of their business operations, supporting economic growth within the borough. This is consistent with the intent of policy CP15 and national planning policy, which allows for the expansion and investment accommodation needs and having regard to the needs of specific sectors of the business community, in this case the new occupier of Unit 310.

Character of the Area:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

The two compounds will have a modest height of 3m, the largest volumetrically being proposed to extend and therefore joined to the main industrial building on site itself. This compound will project from the application building by 14.5m and have a depth of 7.7m. Plant within this compound will not exceed a height of 3m and will not therefore be visible externally. The second compound housing the LN2 tank will have the same height of 3m but have a length of 4.7m and depth of 6.3m. The LN2 tank itself will rise to an overall height of 5.84m.

The proposal would represent a modest development within the context of the site, and being located mainly towards the south-western corner of the existing building and behind the secure gates that enclose the work yard, it would not be of significance to the overall visual appearance of the application site and its surrounding, particularly in the context of the Business Park, where these type of commercial/industrial structures are common. Likewise, the proposed flues to be installed on the roof of the existing building would be a modest increase to the overall height and would not result in a considerable change to the external appearance of the building.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The nearest residential dwellings are located on Merril Drive to the south of the

application site, and approximately 76.8m (linear) away from the location of the proposal. The other buildings to the west of the site are units nos. 260 & 270 which are office buildings within the business park, therefore it is not envisaged that the proposal would result in any negative impact upon adjoining occupiers or residential dwellings.

Environmental Health:

The WBC Environmental Health Officer has evaluated the proposal, noting that the proposed location of the major plant installation at the front/side of the existing commercial unit is ideal. Certainly, the units are likely to generate noise but given the operational hours of the unit, the enclosure they will be within, and the fact that the only affected premises are commercial where background is already noisy (the nearest residential properties are approximately 76.8m south of the site), it is unlikely there would be any significant noise nuisance upon adjoining land occupiers. The Officer has therefore raised no objections to the proposal, but has advised that a good practice would be to install all plants on anti-vibration mounts. This will be added as an Informative.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

There are no changes to the existing parking arrangements for the building, and the proposals do not affect the parking provision on site. No further consideration is therefore necessary on this aspect.

Flooding and Drainage:

The application site is mostly within flood zone 1, with its SW corner being within flood zone 2. The site gently slopes from SW to NE and is currently made up of mostly concrete paved HGV loading area.

The WBC Flood Risk and Drainage Officer has evaluated the proposal, noting the surface water drainage is proposed into the existing watercourse to the SW boundary of the site, however, it is not clear how runoff from the impermeable area created will be managed prior to discharge to the watercourse. This has been clarified by the applicant who has submitted an additional plan (drawing 00-101 Rev T1) to confirm that the ground equipment is to be mounted on a frame on ground pads and as such, there will be no additional hard surfacing and therefore no additional surface water runoff. Existing surface water runoff will drain into an interceptor before being discharged. This is considered acceptable and no further concerns are raised with regard to flooding/ drainage.

Landscape and Trees:

There are no protected trees within the application site and the area where development is proposed is mainly covered in hardstanding, so that there would be no negative impact on any trees or landscape features.

Ecology:

Great Crested Newts:

The application site is partly within amber and red Great Crested Newt (GCN) impact risk zones. Whilst no comments have been received from NatureSpace who are the statutory consultee, it is noted that the specific site in which development is proposed to be located to the south-west of the existing commercial building, is entirely hard-surfaced other than a small linear area of grass verge comprising of street furniture (a lighting post & no-entry sign). Furthermore, no part of the proposed development would take place on the grass verge, and it is noted that the site is separated from the nearest water body/adjoining potential foraging area by a 7m wide service road. As such, it is highly unlikely that the proposal would result in any impact upon GCN foraging areas. No further consideration is therefore necessary on this aspect.

Biodiversity Net Gain:

As of 2nd April 2024, a 10% Biodiversity net gain (BNG) for minor developments is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, this planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met (the biodiversity gain condition).

The WBC Ecology Officer has reviewed the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Ref PP-13288486, 9 August 2024) and the plans and documents submitted in support of the application, and is satisfied that there is minimal potential for protected species and that a biodiversity gain condition can be secured.

The WBC Ecology Officer has raised no ecological objections to the development proposed, but has recommended a tree protection condition and an external lighting condition so that no external lighting is installed on site without the prior written approval of the local planning authority. In this respect, there are no trees in close proximity to the location of the development, and the site hosts an existing commercial building where there is already external lighting. Therefore, these conditions are not considered reasonable nor necessary for the purpose of development proposed.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no

significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION	
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Conditions agreed:	Not required
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Recommendation:	Approval
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Date:	22 October 2024
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Earliest date for decision:	24 September 2024
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Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
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JMM

Date:	23 October 2024
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